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departure

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DEPARTURE

VOLUME TWO NUMBER FIVE

POETRY AND THE "ARRIERE-GARDE"

ASK anyone with an alert interest in the poetry of the last few years what quality he most misses. He will be bound to admit that it is something that can only be described as "a sense of excitement". This is not especially true of prose. But the poetry of the moment has none of the same vigour. The older writers, with few exceptions, seem inhibited, reserved or repentant, and the younger ones exhibit little of the colour or strength that their elders once possessed.

This is not to say that the younger writers lack efficiency, or sensitivity. It is, to put it simply, that the life has gone out of them. They appear to be hedged in by the fear of echoing the themes or imitating the styles of leading modern writers. They are beset by a sterilising sense of guilt at being poets at all in our kind of society: Dr. Leavis' *Scrutiny,* which attempted to lock out as redundant practitioners so many of their labouring predecessors, now eyes these present-day poets wryly from its own grave. And meanwhile, the long and anonymous columns of a prominent weekly have urged them to consolidate on their losses, for retreat is the best form of advance.

There is only one course for a poet in this modern dilemma. The important poetry of the near future will not be that which aims at a pseudo-"consolidation," overloading verse with minor themes or archaic subtleties. The better poetry will be that which accomplishes a synthesis of the two great advances in contemporary poetry: the liberation of style, present in the verse forms of Pound or the language of Dylan Thomas; and the liberation of theme, achieved in poetry ranging from the early Eliot to the writing of the thirties. The state of society should suggest to the thinking poet both his right to his personal vision and his responsibility as a writer to the remains of culture in that society. He should be aware of the dangers, from television to power politics, which threaten the civilised elements, and yet, at the same time, he should remain defiantly assured of his place and vocation as an artist, not descending (in his art, at least) to the arena himself, armed with easy rhetoric and primed with "stock responses".

His best course will, in short, be that suggested by his personal inspiration, backed by his own interpretation of his outstanding contemporaries, and tempered by his individual application of their stylistic and thematic advances. And although he may not find approval for it among some critics, he will have demonstrated his awareness of some higher artistic and social values and earned the gratitude of posterity.

NICHOLAS MOORE

The Seven Proud Walkers

(for D.T.)

The first walker preserved his peace of mind
With a hey-dey-di-do
And a fiddle-de-dee.

The second walker preserved his opulent pace
With a swing and a swaggeroo
And alacrity.

The third walker was Johnny-ahead-in-air,
A pedestrian fool,
And a minor.

The fourth walker was beautiful beyond stepping,
Gracefully classical,
And a major.

The fifth walker walked like a daze in a dream,
And twitched like a loony,
Was pathic.

The sixth walker jumped and skipped like a lamb,
And was Juny and moony,
Egregious, but erratic.

And I—I walked with a death in my heart
And a New York ghost behind me,
With a friend at my side and a world in my head
And tears in my eyes to blind me.

ELIZABETH JENNINGS

The Monastery of San Francesco, Fiesole

The city is the shadow here
Cast by this hill, these trees, these old men's thoughts.
It is the monastery and the lights
Of candles are the real image. There,
Prayers move towards a vision in the chant
Of monks, and minutes mingle in consent.

Altitude lifts men to a state in which
Not the chant only but all actions are
Approximating to a prayer.
The women weaving baskets also touch
The straw as if they would tell out their beads
For here no body from the mind recedes.

Only the restless other side of the mind
Desires the city in the plain,
But soon is turned again to timelessness
For here the whole man is adjusted in
The movement of the weaving hand,
The bell that separates the silences.
The vision of these men flows through us like
The heart's own healing of heartache.

A lizard hurries by the wall,
A beggar puts a hand out for our alms.
This village spread out loosely on the hill
Is strong as fortresses and calms
Our thoughts. We are drawn to it like a wind
And gladly blend the body with the mind.

MARGARET LEWIS ALBANESE

Dark Aviary

Late through the glass twilight that guards the sky,
An aviary showered by early stars,
The edge of daylight dims, the suncloud sleeps,
A bird of dusk, horizon wing at rest.
Where the shadowy flight-cage stirs to a spheric cry,
Where space migration moves beyond these bars,
Cygnus, the swan, a slow wing-vigil keeps
Till dawn comes whirring up with hummingbird breast.

H. S. EVELING

Sermon, Cumbrian Style

Where cloven print is on the floor
The angry hooves have danced a measure,
Before the holy altar piece
The dark and dancing thing has spurned the treasure;
The country people and the florid parson dwell
Close to the fractured god, the thrashing floor of hell.

Under the frowning Man the preacher
Rips the fable from his tongue,
In metaphor the fingers strip
The blistering body where it hung,
Their dryness quenching in the blood,
Their hunger taken in the incarnate food.

To walk in holiness and joy
Along the silver shining choirs
He draws the lurching flesh to feel
The sweet contagion of the fires;
The country people and the roaring parson dwell
Where silence jars and storm is musical.

MARY LOMER

The Swan

The great white wings of the swan beat dully
Where the river parted like a glimmering shell;
Poised, her wings outstretched, and the spray fell
Lucid from the arched span of her breast.

Like some smooth-curved ellipse she reared;
The apse of a sculptured moment, timeless hung
From an eternal chain. Her shadow flung
A darkness rippling through the broken reeds.

As from beneath I watched the solid whiteness hover;
The perfect line, the swell of neck and flank;
Until the warmth drooped forward, the dark mass sank
Slowly into a weight of smothered feathers.

SOMETHING IN VIEW

by Philip Oakes

WE drove out of Athens in the early morning, the sun shaking the line of the road and a fine white dust blowing back into the truck. It was a bad road, a bad day for driving, and the end of a bad week.

It began when a young woman named Ionna Hatzigiannis glanced casually at a first floor window of the Greek Air Ministry and saw to her surprise the figures of the Virgin and Child. A crowd attracted by her cries completely blocked the road, and Air Ministry officials, innocent of the cause of the disturbance, equipped themselves with revolvers and ammunition to deal with a full scale riot.

The window on which the vision appeared was examined and under the supervision of a priest, thoroughly cleaned, but the figures remained, apparently embedded in the glass. Within ten minutes the second vision, almost identical to the first, was seen on the window of an advertising agency in an adjacent street.

It was the season for miracles. The orange trees lining the city streets were in flower and nightingales sang at night in the Zappeon Gardens. There was a lull in the mountain fighting and the political situation, while touchy as always, was not immediately dangerous.

Spring was warming into summer and insects, with and without wings, that had passed the winter months in a state of trance beneath peeling wall-paper and rotten wood-work felt the pull of the sun and turned to the light in search of blood.

Houses were scrubbed out and the boards were soaked in paraffin. A fresh layer of whitewash was applied to sallow walls, and lines of washing shone with a new brilliance about the hovels below the Acropolis. Beneath the bedroom window the neighbour's pig circled its pen, sniffing the poached ground for scraps of food and rasping its flanks along the stuccoed wall. At night its sighs of relief sounded like the murmurs of a well-fed ghost.

After a bitter winter of civil war and many deaths there was a lessening of tension, a state of irresponsibility that bordered on hysteria. The war had gone on too long. It was not a popular war. The casualty lists on either side included the names of brothers and lovers and the wish for victory was complicated by the fear of the cost. Feeling was exhausted and there was a tendency to laugh or cry rather than to reason.

The saints made their appearance at this juncture almost as though in answer to prayer or the contrivance of an astute stage manager. One saint would have caused comment but the extent of the visitation was stupefying. By noon on the first day we were surfeited with miracles. Fifty visions covering the scale of divinities had been reported

and members of an Army billet were gratified to learn that no less than four minor saints had taken up residence in their windows.

Impartially, the visions appeared in all quarters of the city. One night hotels in Ommonia Aquare were no less favoured than the more respectable quarters about the palms and cafe tables close to the Royal Palace; and a particularly well defined image of a bearded figure, said to be Saint Peter, gleamed from the window of a wine store famous for its cherry brandy.

Scouting parties, whenever possible including a priest, made a house to house survey of the city. Extra police were called out to control the traffic and a steady influx of the faithful arrived by every bus from the outlying districts.

On the second day the saints were still with us. From the suburb of Kallithea came news that a girl aged fourteen had shown signs of the stigmata and it was rumoured that the Archbishop Damaskinos himself was to investigate the phenomenon.

There were surprisingly few sceptics. The divine origin of the visions was almost unanimously accepted and instead, debate centred on their significance. It was thought by some that they foretold the end of the war and by others that they presaged greater carnage. Arguments were produced by either side.

The dissenters also had their case. The saints proved to be strangely unphotogenic and photographers produced excellent prints of perfectly normal windows, but without any outline of a vision. It was suggested that the iridescent robes so clearly seen in the glass were produced by traces of oil in the window cleaners' buckets and that public credulity fitted them to will.

No argument was conclusive, and obligingly the saints remained on view to prolong the discussion.

By the fourth day Athens had the aspect of a revivalist centre. Commerce was unsettled and seamen on the Piraeus waterfront had seized the unprecedented opportunity to become layabouts in the name of questing science. The Church took matters in hand and issued a statement which said in effect " Go home quietly and pray. There is no explanation ". The miracles were over: Official.

That evening the streets were almost empty and the only crowds were inside the churches and inside one cinema which, with some enterprise, was showing " The Song of Bernadette ".

The windows were washed and scoured and the visions faded. Work was resumed and the war went on. It was a little shocking that four days of fantasy and fervour could be experienced and absorbed so easily. There were no signs of a spiritual hangover. The saints had come, the saints had gone, like spring water. No residue remained.

Not only shocking, but exasperating, that cafe gossips could invest the most trivial of their discussions with the same incendiary passion

that had warmed their speculation on the saints. The handsome young men walking innocently hand in hand towards the University suddenly appeared offensive, facile and shallow. The women were hysterics. The national mentality was that of a small excitable child given to violent, unreasoned loyalties that were abandoned unpredictably, without any consideration.

It was rather like watching a family man whose wife had left him, continuing with his business affairs, unaffected and quite content. He was not behaving according to the rules. He should not be happy, but distrait: it was annoying that he would not conform.

So it was with the passing of the saints. Because the aftermath was empty, the event became suspect.

We drove out of Athens glad to leave. The truck bounced in pot-holes and the radiator bubbled and threw up little jets of steam. We stopped outside the gate of a farm and climbed out in search of water. A few bald hens bustled away and a small crowd in the farm yard came to meet us.

A short man with a long brown face looked in the back of the truck and then in the driver's cabin. "Where is the patient?" he asked.

"What patient?"

"You came to see Barba Thanasi?"

"We came to ask for water".

He appeared not to understand. "Barba Thanasi lives here," he said.

"Will he give us water?"

He smiled gradually and then nodded. "Of course," he said.

We followed him into the yard, a rough patch of ground enclosed by a wattle fence. The farm was to our right and directly ahead, a new brick outhouse with three rooms, a red tin roof and windows with yellow shutters.

The crowd parted and a tall old man wearing the tunic and pleated skirt of a Greek shepherd came towards us. On his feet were large tasselled shoes and on his head, a small black hat. His face was lined and alert and plushy with a week's growth of beard.

"Barba Thanasi" said our informant. We shook hands and he waved us towards the outhouse. The crowd followed like a thin black tide.

Inside the building it was hot and sonorous with flies. We waited uncertainly while Barba Thanasi entered an inner room. He held the door open and beckoned us in. The short man trod on our heels: "He is inviting you to watch him at work," he said. "He has a reputation as a healer. He is a good man." He smiled several times with great energy.

A woman came in with a small boy cringing in her arms. His

hip was broken and encased in plaster; tears had dirtied his face and seeing the room full of strangers he began to cry again.

The old man touched the cast gently and then without hesitating, cut it away from the boy's body. He opened a window and tossed it out into a field waist high with weeds. It looked like an overgrown bone-yard. There were casts of every description, plaster envelopes to fit arms and legs and torsos, all slit and gutted, powdering in the sun.

In a bowl Barba Thanasi mixed to a paste the white of an egg, finely cut soap and ouzou—a local aniseed spirit—until it was stiff and foamy. This he applied to the hip between layers of newspaper, patting and moulding it to the flesh.

Soon the hip was completely encased and drying in the heat. The boy returned to his mother's arms, whimpering quietly but quite absorbed by the operation.

We asked and were told that the old man was once a shepherd in the mountains of Thessaly. His boyhood was spent in watching the family herd of sheep and tending them when they fell sick. He came to know the exact location of every nerve, tendon, ligament and bone in their bodies and discovered by touch alone how to manipulate broken and dislocated limbs.

He dissected dead sheep and so learned anatomy, and to recognise the physical similarities between his flayed subjects and human beings. Before he was twenty years old he was known as a village healer and his reputation followed him to Attica where, as an old man he settled with his wife and two grown sons.

Every day, we were told, there were crowds at the gate. He had been compelled to fix surgery hours and leave the bulk of the farm work to his sons. Unable to read, he kept no record of his cases. He asked no fee for his treatment. If the patients wished to make a donation it was left to them to decide what to give. He refused to touch any money and instead, it was dropped in a cloth bag hanging beside a bed in the surgery.

The outhouse, which contained a room for overnight visitors unable to travel, was built by a wealthy patient who wished to express his gratitude. The window shutters had been painted by another, without the resources of the first.

Someone brought water for the radiator and we said goodbye. The short man accompanied us to the truck, talking incessantly with the professional affability of a business manager.

"He is a little simple," he said. "He could have made a fortune, but he is wilful". He sighed deeply and spread his own unremarkable hands.

We drove off along the bad road, bracing ourselves against the pitch and toss of the wheels and the collapse of the springs and a

mile further on we turned back to Athens.

The company of saints and the old man with healing in his hands were neighbours in fact and experience. Both sides of the coin bore the same face and the coin itself was common currency.

The miraculous was meant for use and not for contemplation only. It was not to be debased—as the old man had seen—but, to bring any benefit, it had to be spent. An understanding of this was a property of the country as much as the quality of light that surrounded people and objects, presenting them whole and unselectively, presenting intact the individual and the experience.

A failure to accept this was a failure on our part, a refusal to deal with facts as they were and not as we expected them to be. Our digestion was not up to the requirements. We needed time—which we had not got—or, in its place, a tolerance and love which we had yet to learn.

In the fields, men and women stopped work to wave as the truck drove by. We waved back and our education began.

KAREN LOEWENTHAL

The Ascent of Pisgah

Now, Wrathful Cloud, release this foot
to falter or fail. The leaven put
beyond liege, that neither the wandering sea
nor my people's season unbury me.

This involuntary hand
that bore Your miracles, as the Land
bears cattle and hives, was spent
calming the vessels of your huge advent.

Fingered into rain my hope of rock
rivers the wilderness now. Lock
now a purpose in each arrant part
and affluence into my arid heart.

CHRIS BJERKNES

Sea Wiped Wind From The Dawn

the sun bouncing from the withered night as the tern
starts its prowl in the uneasy eye of dawn, and below

the heron heeling the grass, spurs where the
minnows whir like leaves, and three

pearl-eyed gulls like furies rise, a weird chori
mocking in their poise, like white-faced clowns,

like ten cent jewels fused to the hair
of a careless wind, until their white wings plunge,

the bowie knives of their beak tear at the taut skin of
the sea, lifting, flay its apple green, then perch atop

a sea sucked-stone to gnaw the pink gills of their lepidic
prey, like mountebanks in the yawning light let their

laughter bleed, stretch their laughter out
while along the weeping waters of the quay the dark

palely creeps, as time smears the butter yellow
light against the walls, gulls salt bleached, lean

against the wind, and wipe their beaks on the sun's
stone.

ANTHONY BAILEY

Personal Report

These days there are such men
Who calculate
Our chances: when to propagate
And when we need not worry any more.
They'd plant us on their dreamless shore

Where I've no wish to come.
They would close our sand
With waking surveys, try to command
The tides with tables. I too have trod
The beach and know it rather as a God

And have flung my own statistics
As a sacrifice.
It is not difficult to pay the price
Demanded; it is the only way Our Fact
Gains greater value in a common act.

And so if we, pattern-makers too,
Should make it thus
A tribute, who could tell us
That this tempest's one we may not keep;
And would we ever want to get to sleep?

JENNY JOSEPH

From The Heart Of Ashes

The yellow Banksea roses now are over
That nodded against the wall, so freshly open.
Always until ' to-morrow ' we dared not pick them.
Now a few bits of leaf float to the ground.
A great wind came and blew all round the house
Taking away the Wisteria in one night.
Fading too are the raspberry-coloured hawthorns
And laburnum and lilac that call to our minds the thunder.
It seems that at the centre of the year
The sky would pick apart all growth it tended
As if a climber, heart towards the peak,
Saw sudden shadows backward across the snow
And left the mountain unqueried in its fastness.
The river bank is deserted once again
Except for the solitary drenched vagabond
Silent with anger at the weather's change.
The forests are unvisited, and all the buttercups spoilt.

Then, while deciding that we must pack up the dreams
We had fixed on to plant in the quivering maze of heat
One great white rose beckons high above reach
Like the flower that gave the desperate beast his chance
To centre the world round him, for beauty's rashness.
Other charms unwind in the tired town :
The haunting mountain is suddenly announced conquered
And the smoke screen clears to unwrap from between the moors
A valley untouched by the withering heat of the mirage.

Recent German Poetry: An Introduction to Manfred Hausmann and Hans Egon Holthusen, by Marianne Leibholz.

HAUSMANN and Holthusen are two writers whose poetry is read with interest and enjoyment in Germany at the moment. Their popularity indicates two contrasting tendencies in the taste of the general poetry reading public of the post-war years. Hausmann follows in the German romantic lyrical tradition. Holthusen, influenced by modern English poetry, is primarily interested in thought, and it is this, expressed in a neat, apt, often novel manner, which gives the reader a sense of joy. Hausmann treats the eternal lyrical subjects, God, nature, love and death without reference to any particular period in history, while Holthusen deals with these themes emphatically from the point of view of his own time. Hausmann's vocabulary is largely romantic, and he avoids modernisms. Rhyme plays an important part in his verse. Holthusen does not shrink from using any expressions in modern usage, and his best work is unrhymed.

The elder poet, Manfred Hausmann, was born in 1898. His *Gedichte*, which appeared in 1949, contain some hitherto unpublished verse and poems published in separate volumes in 1938, 1941, and 1946. Hausmann is also a well-known writer of novels, short stories, plays and essays.[1]

He can to an unusual extent arouse vivid states of feeling in the reader, both delicately nuanced moods and very strong feelings. He is sensitive, perceptive, and honest. In his best poems, which usually deal with love or nature, he evokes the intended feeling by giving a scene or picture in exquisitely musical language. He is affected by light, colour, form, sound and scent. Light in particular fascinates him. (The words moon, sun, star, night, cloud, fog, light, gold, silver, black, grey occur constantly; glassy transparency interests him.) In his nature pictures he is always describing the light and its changes. He observes motion, a soft breath of wind or the wild stampeding of horses, but mostly notices slight, subtle movements. He has a sensitive ear, especially for little sounds, human voices, notes of music, and countryside noises. Scents he mentions often. He does not write specifically about his own time, and makes hardly any references to modern technical civilisation.

In the nature poems a picture is set before the reader, and he is involved in the mood of the landscape. Season, time of day, weather and light are referred to. Hausmann shows a predilection for delicate shades, starry and moonlit nights, April evenings, early spring and summer mornings, snow and fog. He gives sketches of North German landscapes, draws sea and moor pictures, gardens, villages, houses. There are a few descriptions of flowers, birds and trees, full of accurate detail and bright colour. He adds personal comments to some, but not all, of his nature pictures.

Where Hausmann's experience of God is the sole subject of the poem, usually no scene or picture evoking moods or feelings is given, but the experience is described more or less directly. Some exquisite verses result

[1] Cf. Siegfried Hajek, *Manfred Hausmann* (a study of the poet's life and work, published in September, 1953, by Verlag Emil Müller).

when nature or other pictures arousing feeling are introduced into such poems. Hausmann thinks of God as the creator, and as ever present behind his world. Man is sinful, he often cannot see God, does not know where he is going, is lonely (a glass wall between him and the world frequently symbolises this separateness). Man best experiences God's presence when he calls out to him in his deepest despair.

Gedichte contains several other groups of poems. Some poems tell a fairy story, a German-fairy-tale-and-folksong atmosphere pervades them, they teem with kings, stepmothers, royal children, love and death and mystery. Christmas is the subject of several poems, and here the happenings at Bethlehem are picturesquely described in simple, childlike scenes. There are some exquisite translations of French folksongs, full of delicate moods, strong emotion, striking pictures and musical lines. Folksong and popular song mingle in the sailor poems. Sometimes Hausmann writes about old pictures or sculptures, or, more successfully, music. He conveys exactly the sound and special character of his favourite instruments—violin, flute, bass violin and cembalo.

His poetry has been much influenced by German folksong—this inspiration is felt in the subject matter, imagery, vocabulary, and the songlike quality of the verse. Sometimes the reader is reminded of other German poets who themselves underwent this influence, of such romantics as Eichendorff, or late romantics like Hermann Hesse. Hausmann's landscapes often resemble Verlaine's, and those of certain French impressionist painters, Renoir's in particular. There are occasional touches of Laforgue[1], Rilke[2], Hoffmannsthal[3]. Hausmann uses the language of the day, but avoids modernisms, technical, slang, and ' unromantic ' words. His syntax is uncomplicated, his vocabulary concrete and very simple. A few musical and nautical expressions, some names of birds, flowers and stars, are the only semi-technical terms the general reader might not know. Words already over-rich in associations acting on the emotions are often and purposely used (e.g. moon, star, night, sea, boat, light, morning, wind, wave, sleep, hour, blood, scent, hand, word, eye, kiss, love, death, beauty, etc.). These words are placed in stressed positions, and several of them occur in the same verse or even line. Hausmann knows the musical value of each word exactly, and handles a variety of technical devices with great skill. He mostly uses rhyme—where he does not, much of the poem's musicality is lost. In his best work content and form underline and enhance each other, and some quite perfect poems are the result.

Hans Egon Holthusen's first volume of poetry appeared after the end of the last war. Born in 1913, he has published two volumes of poems, *Hier in der Zeit* (1949) and *Labyrinthische Jahre* (1952), the earliest poems

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[1] Cf. Gesang der kleinen Traurigkeiten. [2] Cf. *Gedichte* p. 85: " Und Augen./Und die Augen haben leicht/und weh sich zugetan, fast wie bei denen/die traurig sich an den Geliebten lehnen/ ". [3] Cf. p. 47: " -will es dunkel wie Musik erblühen./Eine Flöre weint verloren./Ach das Leben, angerührt vom Tode/süsser singt es seine Klage./Goldne, atemlose traumumlohte, hungesunkne Nachmittage./ " P.44 " und ein Geruch von altem Honig geht/aus seinem Tod entsetzlich süss herauf."

in *Hier in der Zeit* dating from 1936. He is also known as a gifted essayist.

In his poetry Holthusen analyses and reports, reflects, explains and criticizes. Rilke, and particularly T. S. Eliot, and some poets in the Auden group, have strongly influenced him. He writes about the lives of people in his own time. The various subjects are not dealt with as isolated phenomena, but considered in their broadest implications. Like the early T. S. Eliot and poets in the Auden group, Holthusen shows a definite interest in contemporary social and political life. Many poems deal specifically with the position of the Germans during and after the war. The war experience determines their outlook and his, and preoccupies him. He expects his readers to remember acutely the physical and mental torment caused by the war, to know from experience the last extremity to which body and soul can be reduced, and the conditions under which men may lose all human attributes. He depicts the state of mind of those who have come through alive, and who are trying to rebuild an existence in post-war Germany.

Some poems are devoted to descriptions of the last war or situations directly related to it. Elsewhere, references to the war constantly occur. Holthusen speaks of the experiences of soldiers and civilians, gives scenes full of realistic detail from France, Russia, Berlin, from bombed cities and the German flight from the East. He pictures man's bodily and mental anguish in various situations, showing a Christian pity for the sufferers of all countries. Incessantly he condemns war, and the part played in the last one by the Germans fills him with regret and grief. History appears to him as a strange entanglement of blood and sorrow, afflicting the nations and seemingly vain.

Looking around in the post-war world, he finds man racked with doubt and lacking the security he longs for. Everything about him appears to be crooked and falling. Life is an incomprehensible incident, made up of pain, lust, guilt, misunderstandings. The activities of man in the course of a normal city day are enumerated on several occasions—he is shown talking of things and people, meddling in the lives of others, saddening them, stealing joy from them; he is seen buying flowers, bread, bananas, paying visits, wearing new clothes, watching the weather, driving along streets, wasting feelings, money, petrol, etc. The life of one modern woman is all anxiety, fatigue, excitement, and lies, with nothing to hold it together. Holthusen introduces many contemporary types, transitory, specific products of our particular society. In ' Lady at the Beach ' ' The Man of Action ', ' The Lady Druggist ', ' The Crime ', he writes their portraits in MacNeice's manner.

Particularly in the early poems Holthusen is constantly struck by contradictions inherent in one and the same condition—which may be both sweet and bitter, hard and blissful, beautiful and poisonous, etc. In the later poems he is always preoccupied with the problem of time, which he frequently discusses, often trying to convey his conception metaphorically. There is much here to remind the reader of the later T.S. Eliot.

Holthusen speaks of love as bringing no lasting fulfilment. Death he describes in terms of the pain it causes to the living—the pain of body and soul man experiences in his own death, and his pain at the deaths of

others. With horror Holthusen thinks of the absurd deaths, full of fear and violence, that will end our lives—a shot in the neck, or a motor accident, a razorblade or an abscess—while our unwilling soul clings to this earth. In the ' Suicide ' poem death, though unpleasant, is seen as a way out.

We go through life " leaving a fine trail of blood behind the foot." Sometimes Holthusen looks to the Christian religion for aid. Hs asks God to have mercy on us, says that prayer alone can help, that we can only find a firm footing in this world with the help of God. He speaks of God's loving decision, of the joy of God that is deeper than man's sorrow, of a God who in his love and mercy has pity on human suffering. Man cannot manage his life on his own, he must give himself up to God and accept his yoke patiently.

Holthusen uses the language of the day, the modern vocabulary with colloquial, slang, and technical expressions. He frequently gives these expressions a new significance, raising them in freeing them from their prose associations. His vocabulary is as modern as that of T. S. Eliot, Auden or MacNeice, but as this modernity sounds less familiar in German than in English poetry, Holthusen proceeds with caution. His imagery is taken from the life around him, mainly from modern city life, and reminds the reader of T. S. Eliot, Auden and MacNeice—as does the pattern of the narrative poems and portraits. In the second book, much oftener than in the first, the images, and the juxtaposition of the images, are new and surprising.[1] There is a great number of strikingly poignant, pregnant pictures, neat, precise and condensed, never obscured through an esoteric use of vocabulary or syntax. In the later poems Holthusen obtains considerable effects by paying more attention to rhythm and the musical sound of words. Rhyme he seldom uses, and where it occurs in the shorter poems it makes no impression and adds nothing.

In the earlier poems Holthusen's ideas often seem more important to him than the way they are presented, but in *Labyrinthische Jahre* he has as a rule found a form that expresses his thought to perfection. *Labyrinthische Jahre* represents a marked, all-round advance on *Hier in der Zeit*.

Examples from the work of both writers should end this introduction to their poetry; the following translations from *Gedichte* and *Labyrinthische Jahre* are fairly representative.

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[1]E. g. in *Labyrinthische Jahre* p. 47 " Ruheloses Kardiogramm unermesslichen Daseins " p. 53 " Ich will ein Nein, so klar und wasserhell/wie neunzigprozentiger Wodka." p. 50 " und das Schlusslicht glänzt am letzten Waggon, eine rötliche Träne." (of women) "Ose und Durchlass in selige Gründe " " das Leben wegbrennt/wie loderndes Benzin " p. 25 " Wie brennt der Boden, wo kein Mädchen ist!" etc.

My Life, My Death

Born I was of a girl of hardly twenty,
She wore a blouse with a whalebone collar and Brussels lace.
You know that brownish photo, that wavering smile,
Precocious bliss and slight, uncertain sadness:
A body, a time, shrouded in night of eternity
In which we are not, and are seen by no one on earth.
Here I am: between unborn and nevermore
Lies a span of pain, flesh, lust and guilt,
The incomprehensible incident of my life.

I have sneaked over creaking stairs,
I have lain with women,
At carnival time, and midnight was already past,
Sailor and Columbine.
My hand was beneath the nape of the girl's neck,
That was on the Heath, and the sun stood high, and black the juniper tree.

Why must one leave them all, move from parting to parting
Through labyrinthine years? There remains a fine
Trail of blood behind the foot. But one does not turn . . .
O black juniper tree, dark shadow of happiness!
Ever the echo of love: death.

A womb is deeper than the sea,
Sailor and Columbine.
Lust heavy with eternity,
Sailor and Columbine.
Towards the depths, and from the depths,
That is the return of the dead,
Sailor and Columbine.
O earth, we always remember thee,
With man and woman, wind and light,
Sailor and Columbine.

Death will be violent and full of fear:
A shot in the neck, a car accident, a malignant growth,
A knee, superhuman, upon the chest. Implacably
They will strangle us, kill us, impatiently, secretly,
As one shoots prisoners in underground cellars of terror.
The soul is unwilling, unwilling! Earthly stubbornness
Clings yet to the world. All that is confused,
Amassed, entangled, caught up perplexedly
In hope and impotence, still it will not unravel.
The soul at no time understood all the meaning of it,

Everything always went too quickly, and never
Did the soul love, nor ever know.
Time, circumstances, were always pressing, breath,
Freedom was always lacking to say all
That could not be said. In the end
Silence was kept with the dead.
Thus foolishly we are thrown, face downwards,
Where the others are, into the gaping earth
And laid more gently on the ground of Being.
Can it be true, what the others tell us,
That we are more real here than there above in the light?

MANFRED HAUSMANN

Answer

The death intoxication of the hour
which can be likened to no other joy,
that lovers' longing on still summer days,
that deep, vain longing for eternity,
these you cannot have known:
or you would not dispassionately sing
of sameness in all change, as you do now.

To know the flower's scent is only fair
because it fades, that men but praise the rainbow
for the swift dying of its fleeting light,
to know that beauty owes its radiance
to death, to know this one
this secret of death's many,
and yet not to stay wrapt in such a knowledge,
rather to suffer fully every sadness
of things and flowers, animals and men
in this our world, and all their lustful rages,
perhaps that is wisdom, and the end.

Yet who can do this?

Summer

I'm at the window, darkly, by your side,
and all this ardour, summer's fullness,
grows ecstatic in the great stillness.
We shall be drowned this night.

We never yet have kissed.

How quiet the hours flow,
How quiet the great stars glow,
How quiet is your face,
How quiet is your face!

—Translated by Marianne Leibholz.

Encounter. Nos. 1-4. Edited by Stephen Spender and Irving Kristol. (*Secker & Warburg* for *The Congress for Cultural Freedom.* 2s. 6d. monthly.)

THERE is life; there is literature, which is directly about life; and there is a human activity at another remove of reflection—the three of which might be symbolized by the waters of the ocean, its formed waves, and besides, the misty spray of problems and questions which the movement of water and waves throws off. This spray, one can see, now that four issues have appeared, is the region that *Encounter* is probably going to haunt when at its best and most characteristic. It is a difficult region to see clearly in, and one which often seems more unrewarding than that of the waves (the concern of the purely literary magazine). Its problems are of the sort that occupy talk into the early hours, and are never resolved —what is the Zeitgeist? how may the sum of the culture of this age or that people be described? more urgently, how may we define our own " age's dilemma "?—the abstract problems, in brief. But for all the difficulty of the subject, Sir Herbert Read, W. H. Auden and Nicola Chiaromonte, the Italian writer, have already made vivid and suggestive contributions in these matters. Less happy have been attempts to determine what a young writer *should* do in our time—remarks which only the non-writer will be interested in and in which his interest is fruitless.

Such, anyway, are the parts of the magazine—mostly editorials, comments and reviews—which have so far made up the strongest element in its already distinctive flavour. They have already been intimately and splendidly supplemented by *obiter dicta*, posthumously published, of some of our century's greatest writers—letters of Yeats's and Lawrence's, and extracts from Virginia Woolf's diaries. Beyond that, in matters of literature, *Encounter* has not displayed a great deal of character. It has had stories desultorily picked from India, Japan and Wyndham Lewis; in its poetry columns, even more unfortunately, it seems to have been concerned hitherto primarily to print one representative poem by most of our familiar poets: only one poet in the four issues has been represented by more than a single poem.

Encounter's real danger, in fact, is that of becoming a sort of intellectual *Picture Post*. The remaining features of all these four issues have been largely in the nature of " scoops ". There have been verses written by a mountaineer on Everest, a slim English Kinsey Report by Geoffrey Gorer, and several curiously gossipy articles about exotic lands (with magnificent photographs). Its political slant has already been widely discussed in reviews of its first issue: here it may simply be added that though its editorials have continued to be as candidly anti-communist as its first, its articles since the inaugural number do not seem at all expressly designed to favour that cause.

Derwent May

Thirty-Nine Preludes, by Laurence Clark. (Villiers Publications, 290 West End Lane, N.W.6. 4s.)
Now is the Winter, by Peter Robins. (Poetry Manchester. 2s. 6d.)

AT his worst, Mr. Laurence Clark is a tasteless and a mannered writer. He is capable of some pretentious diction (' pan-human Venus ' ' florid asphyxiations '), absurdly far-fetched imagery (' the Anthologists ceased chirping '), at least one music hall pun (monstroCities), and the pseudo-sincerity of " Chez Moi ":

A hideous woman crying in a roadway.
Why is she crying? Because she is hideous.

This is a pity, for one occasionally feels that something more impressive is weighed down by such devices, as in

The great books went through me,
Sampling my machine,
Then wandered vaguely away
From such poor scolarship.

But the most that can be said for him—as represented, at least by this volume—is that his less derivative poems show signs of some feeling for words (' classic susurrus/Of rain and resignation fills the night) and that he can sometimes strike out an original phrase (his thinking-cap/Comes down like another ice age).

Mr. Robins, on the other hand, is a romantic realist. Although his language is neither recherché nor vivid, he attempts a variety of forms and themes, and can polish a cliche (' this child who laughs like a rose ', ' that girl with blossoming nipples ') as well as cap a poem with a gay title (My Autumn Gunman). His great virtue seems to lie in a nice sense of rhythm (he is equally at home in free verse and iambic) and he can convey the atmosphere of a dingy night club as well as sketch the character of Denton Welch.

The difference between these two poets is largely one of approach. One is dressing up borrowed ideas; the other, without striving after effect, is trying to produce poems of genuine feeling without frills. Compare this passage from Mr. Robins' with the lines from " Chez Moi " above.

You wrote:
It has been still to-day
though I read there
It has been still
as that long summer afternoon
we both lay in an open boat
below great skies which no wind stirred.

Both try to be straightforward and sincere. The first fails because it is contrived and artificial. The second succeeds by its naturalness and is quietly moving. Together, the two constitute a fair commentary on the rewards of simplicity and the dangers of over-elaboration.

George MacBeth

NEW CONTRIBUTORS

NICHOLAS MOORE is the author of several volumes of verse, notably " The Glass Tower " and " Recollections of the Gala ". With Richard March, he edited *Poetry* (*London*) until its recent suspension.

MARGARET LEWIS ALBANESE, Californian poet, critic and literary broadcaster, has contributed work to leading magazines in the U.S.A., and has recently published a volume, " Heir to Eden ".

H. S. EVELING was born in 1925 and lived in Cumberland during his early years. A graduate of Durham University, he is now working for his B.Phil. at Lincoln College, Oxford.

PHILIP OAKES has published poems in many magazines, notably the *New Statesman, The Spectator, World .Review* and *The Window* " Something in View " is one of several pieces written in and about wartime Greece.

ANTHONY BAILEY spent part of his childhood in the U.S.A. and has published poems and articles in several English and American publications. He is now in his second year at Merton College, Oxford.

MARIANNE LEIBHOLZ has studied German and English literature at Göttingen, Oxford, and at the College of Europe at Bruges, where she is now engaged in writing a thesis.

MARY LOMER is now in her third year at Somerville College, Oxford. Her poems and articles have been published in *Isis* and other Oxford magazines.

MUSIC AND POETRY MEETINGS

The present season of music and poetry meetings at the Ethical Church Hall, 4a Inverness Place, Bayswater, continues on the second Monday of each month until May. The programmes, which include readings by poets of their own work, are at 7 p.m., but tea is served at 6.15. They are open to the public, and admission is free (a silver collection is taken). Details may be had from Alec Craig, 5 Avenue House, Belsize Park Gardens, N.W.3.

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